

### AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A method for improving the intelligibility of speech output by a speech synthesizer, the method comprising the steps acts of:  
determining if at least one uncommon word exists in a text;  
if it is determined that an uncommon word exists in the text, marking the text to identify the uncommon word; and  
outputting synthesized speech by the speech synthesizer by inserting a first variable length pause before and a second pause after the output of the synthesized speech of the uncommon word to offset the uncommon word from its surrounding speech, and inserting at least one third variable length pause within the output of the synthesized speech of the uncommon word to increase the duration of the uncommon word by pronouncing the uncommon word in at least two pronounced portions separated by the at least one third pause.
2. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the determination is made by comparing the input text to common words stored in a database and determining if a word is uncommon if the word is not in the database.
3. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein a word is determined as uncommon if the word is capitalized.
4. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the determination is made by using a statistical language model.
5. (Original) The method of Claim 4, wherein the statistical language model compares a calculated value with a threshold value and if the calculated value is less than the threshold value the word is determined as uncommon.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the determination is made by using a prediction algorithm to predict when a difficult word or phrase has been encountered.

7. (Original) The method of Claim 6, wherein the prediction algorithm compares a calculated value with a threshold value and if the calculated value is less than the threshold value the word is determined as uncommon.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently amended) A system for improving the intelligibility of speech output by a speech synthesizer, comprising:

at least one processor programmed to implement a rare sequence detector for determining if at least one uncommon-words-exist word exists in a text, and if it is determined that an uncommon word exists in the text, marking the text to identify the uncommon word, and outputting synthesized speech by the speech synthesizer by inserting a first-variable-length pause before and a second pause after the output of the synthesized speech of the uncommon word to offset the uncommon word from its surrounding speech, and inserting at least one third variable-length pause within the output of the synthesized speech of the uncommon word to increase the duration of the uncommon word by pronouncing the uncommon word in at least two pronounced portions separated by the at least one third pause.

10. (Original) The system of Claim 9, wherein the rare sequence detector determines an that a word is an uncommon word by comparing the input text to common words stored in a database and determining if a word is uncommon if the word is not in the database.

11. (Original) The system of Claim 9, wherein the rare sequence detector determines that a word is an uncommon word if the word is capitalized.

12. (Original) The system of Claim 9, wherein the rare sequence detector determines that a word is an uncommon word by using a statistical language model.

13. (Original) The system of Claim 12, wherein the statistical language model compares a calculated value with a threshold value and if the calculated value is less than the threshold value the word is determined as uncommon.

14. (Original) The system of Claim 9, wherein the rare sequence detector determines that a word is an uncommon word by using a prediction algorithm.

15. (Original) The system of Claim 14, wherein the prediction algorithm compares a calculated value with a threshold value and if the calculated value is less than the threshold value the word is determined as uncommon.

16-17. (Cancelled)

18. (Currently amended) A computer-readable medium encoded with a plurality of instructions that, when executed by a computer, perform a method comprising acts of: program device-readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for

determining if at least one uncommon word exists word exists in a text; ~~and;~~

if it is determined that an uncommon word exists in the text, marking the text to identify the uncommon word [,]; and

outputting synthesized speech by a speech synthesizer by inserting a first variable length pause before and at least one second pause after the output of the synthesized speech of the uncommon word to offset the uncommon word from its surrounding speech, and inserting at least one third variable length pause within the synthesized speech of the uncommon word to increase the duration of the uncommon word by pronouncing the uncommon word in at least two pronounced portions separated by the at least one third pause.

19. (Currently amended) The computer-readable medium ~~program device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine~~ of Claim 18, wherein a word is determined ~~[[as]]~~ to be an uncommon word if the word is capitalized.

20. (Currently amended) The computer-readable medium ~~program device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine~~ of Claim 18, wherein ~~the determination is made by~~ determining if at least one uncommon word exists comprises using a statistical language model.

21. (Currently amended) The computer-readable medium ~~program device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine~~ of Claim 20, wherein the statistical language model compares a calculated value for a word with a threshold value and if the calculated value for the word is less than the threshold value the word is determined ~~[[as]]~~ to be an uncommon word.

22. (Currently amended) The computer-readable medium ~~program device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine~~ of Claim 18, wherein ~~the determination is made by~~ determining if at least one uncommon word exists comprises using a prediction algorithm.

23. (Currently amended) The computer-readable medium ~~program device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine~~ of Claim 22, wherein the prediction algorithm compares a calculated value for a word with a threshold value and if the calculated value for the word is less than the threshold value the word is determined ~~[[as]]~~ to be an uncommon word.

24. (Cancelled)